

EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS DECISION RECORD

The following decisions were taken on Tuesday, 14th February, 2017 by Cabinet.

Date notified to all Members: Tuesday, 21st February, 2017

With the exception of Decisions 1 to 5 which are subject to Full Council approval on the 2nd March, 2017 the end of the call in period is 5.00 p.m. on Thursday 2nd March, 2017 and therefore, the decisions can be implemented on Friday 3rd March, 2017.

Present:

Chair - Mayor Ros Jones (Mayor of Doncaster with responsibility for Budget and Policy Framework)

Vice-Chair - Councillor Glyn Jones (Deputy Mayor and Portfolio holder for Adult Social Care and Equalities)

Cabinet Member for:

Councillor Joe Blackham	Portfolio holder for Regeneration and Transportation
Councillor Nuala Fennelly	Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Schools
Councillor Pat Knight	Portfolio holder for Public Health and Wellbeing
Councillor Chris McGuinness	Portfolio holder for Communities, the Voluntary Sector and Environment
Councillor Bill Mordue	Portfolio holder for Business, Skills, Tourism and Culture
Councillor Jane Nightingale	Portfolio holder for Housing

Apologies:-

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Tony Corden.

PUBLIC MEETING – SCHEDULE OF DECISIONS

Public Questions and Statements

Councillor Nick Allen asked the Mayor Ros Jones the following question:-

'Do you think your budget demonstrates value for money? How much of the report was officer led and does the budget reflect your manifesto commitments or the policies of national government?'

In the absence of Councillor Nick Allen, the Mayor said she would provide a written response to his question. The written response sent is:-

“These budget proposals continue to deliver my priority of ensuring the Council is able to provide efficient and effective public services, whilst investing in the future of the borough and its residents, despite the harsh austerity measures imposed on Doncaster by central Government.

The punitive Government cuts will not lower my ambitions for our borough and its people. I have made clear my priorities, to help drive forward our economy, increase job creation, raise education standards, build more homes and support residents and communities across Doncaster. In developing the budget we set a remit to protect, and indeed improve, vital front line services, particularly those which support vulnerable people. To do this, we are living within our means, modernising services and striving to deliver value for money in all of our work. I am proud of the effectiveness we have already achieved, improving services through initiatives like our Smart light programme, whilst making savings that minimise the impact of the Government cuts on our residents.

That said, I am extremely disappointed at the Government’s complete failure to deal with the national funding problems facing adult social care and the health service. Their answer, which is to underfund vital services and yet increase the financial burden on local taxpayers, is frankly outrageous. It places strain on to those who can least afford it, through a regressive tax system that benefits wealthy areas over places like Doncaster and South Yorkshire.

The budget has been developed collaboratively to deliver my priorities and those agreed by the Council and I am grateful for members of Overview and Scrutiny for their input and support for the proposals. I have received no feedback from any other political groups on the Council, which I would have been willing to consider. Given that I published the draft proposals in November to allow for input from all Councillors and it is now mid-February, I assume that there will be no late political games from the opposition and that the budget will be supported unanimously in the Council Chamber in two weeks time.

We are seeing the highest levels of employment for more than 10 years, record house building, improved school standards and a transformation of Council services. All have been positively influenced by our work and these proposals build on the solid foundations that we have put in place over the last three years.

We are sticking to that plan and it is paying dividends for Doncaster”.

Decision records dated 31st January, 2017, were noted.

DECISION 1.

1. AGENDA ITEM NUMBER AND TITLE
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6. Revenue Budget 2017/18.

2. DECISION TAKEN

Cabinet recommend to Full Council to approve the Revenue Budget proposals for 2017/18 as set out in the report. This includes:-

- (1) the revenue budget proposals for 2017/18 detailed at Appendix B (savings £21.516m) and Appendix C (pressures £5.255m);
- (2) Council Tax to be increased by 3.99% to £1,237.81 for a Band D property (£825.21 for a Band A) for 2017/18. This includes:-
 - (i) 1.99% council tax increase equates to an increase of £23.69pa for Band D per annum, £0.46 per week (£15.79pa for Band A per annum, £0.30 per week);
 - (ii) 2% Government's Social Care "precept" equates to an increase of £23.80pa for Band D per annum, £0.46 per (£15.87pa for Band A per annum, £0.31 per week);
- (3) the 2017/18 Grants to 3rd Sector Organisations outlined in paragraph 23 and Appendix F;
- (4) the summary fees and charges analysis shown in Appendix G together with the detailed fees and charges proposed for 2017/18 at Appendix H;
- (5) the Medium Term Financial Forecast including all proposals in this as set out in Appendix J; and
- (6) a gross revenue expenditure budget of £483.8m and a net revenue expenditure budget of £213.4m, as detailed in Appendix J.

3. REASON FOR DECISION

The Mayor presented the Revenue Budget for 2017/18 to Cabinet. She reported that the budget proposals would continue to deliver her priority for ensuring the Council is able to provide efficient and effective public services, whilst investing in the future of the borough and its residents despite the harsh austerity measures imposed on Doncaster by central Government.

She stated that she had made it clear that her priorities were to increase jobs, apprenticeships and grow Doncaster's economy. Deliver homes that meet the needs of everyone, raise education standards and increase opportunities. Deliver vital services for children and vulnerable residents and support our communities by delivering efficient and effective services.

In these difficult times, the Council also have to live within its means and must ensure that it meets its goals by modernising and improving services, delivering value for money and working in partnership with the public, private and voluntary sector to maximise the resources available.

It was noted that the Council had worked hard over the last three years to deliver its goals whilst minimising the impact of the draconian Conservative austerity measures which had given the Council a solid foundation to build on.

The Mayor expressed her disappointment at the Government's complete failure to deal with the national funding problems facing adult social care and the health service.

The Mayor reported that the Government's answer was to underfund vital services and then increase the financial burden on local taxpayers which she felt was outrageous. This places strain on those who can least afford it, through a regressive tax system that benefits wealthy areas over places like Doncaster and South Yorkshire. She pointed out that despite this, even wealthy areas were facing large rises and indeed, Conservative led Surrey Council were intending to hold a referendum to increase Council Tax by a staggering 15% until some text messages were exchanged. She stated that unfortunately Government policy means Council Tax rises were inevitable in order to sustain vital services. In fact it was not just inevitable, it was the preferred approach of the Conservative Government.

Through careful planning the Council has managed to limit the proposed rise this year to 3.99% which meant that Council Tax in Doncaster would remain one of the lowest in the Country, but she was deeply disappointed that the Prime Minister had forced these costs on to the people who could least afford them. The Mayor highlighted that the Council's only course of action was to grow its way out of the situation and the good news was that in Doncaster, the Council were delivering on that agenda and the promises it made.

The Mayor continued by highlighting last year's success with regard to the following:-

- An 11 year high in employment figures, with more than 9000 new jobs since 2013;
- The most homes built for 15 years including Council House and specialist homes for the elderly;
- GCSE results going up in Doncaster again bucking the national trend with a further increase in number of schools rated good or better;
- More enforcement against people who don't respect the borough with 8000 fines issued against litter louts;
- Thousands of new energy efficient street lights installed, saving money;
- Even more support for Veterans, valuing the Armed Forces and the work they do; and
- Helped reduce the cost of living through my Big Power Switch, installing solar panels and insulation, meaning thousands of households have benefited from the Council's schemes.

The Mayor thanked all staff and partners who had helped the Council to deliver these successes in often difficult circumstances and stated that the Council approach was paying dividends for Doncaster. The budget sets out how the Council would continue to deliver priorities for Doncaster and deliver even more

success in the coming years.

Councillor John Mounsey, Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee thanked the Mayor for allowing him the opportunity to present Overview and Scrutiny's response to the budget proposals of which a copy had been forwarded to Cabinet following their discussions on the 13th December 2016. He stated that the discussion had been helpful in allowing Members to understand what the key proposals for 2017/18 were, what they seek to achieve and how some of the challenges around deliverability will be addressed. He pointed out that members fully appreciated the difficulties in achieving savings targets whilst delivering services and meeting the Borough's stated priorities. He believed that OSMC's engagement in the budget process had been both productive and positive and took the opportunity to thank Steve Mawson, Simon Wiles and all other Directors for attending meetings and responding to questions raised by the Committee.

Councillor Joe Blackham commended the report and stated that it represented the cumulative effort made by Team Doncaster which was a prime example of Doncaster pulling together to become a role model for other Councils to follow.

Deputy Mayor, Councillor Glyn Jones concurred with the comments made by members. He presented the following addendum which provided clarity to the narrative on Home Care at page 17 of the report:-

If people need support and are eligible for it then they will receive it. Care at home is a priority. The Council know that people want to stay at home for as long as possible and the Council will work with them if they are eligible to make sure that they are able to do just that.

By working in localities to increase levels of community support that can help people remain independent for longer, we will reduce people's need for formally funded care. We are investing in improved information advice and guidance so people will know what range of options are open to them when they first contact us.

As the ageing population continues to rise and as more people stay in their own homes, we expect the number of intense packages of home support to rise.

We assess each person's situation on an annual basis and we will look at the best way of meeting their needs. Where appropriate we'll highlight community options in their local area and new options such as assistance from technology. Each package will be tailored to a person's needs and aims to keep them as well as they can be for as long as possible.

Councillor Chris McGuinness noted that whilst there were no significant changes with regard to his portfolio, he wished to highlight the savings made by Private Hire Licences being renewed every 5 years rather than annually. Councillor Nuala Fennelly also highlighted a typing error with regard to Skills

Funding Agency identified on page 25 of the report and whether it should state that funding was due to end in July 2017.

Simon Wiles, Director of Finance and Corporate Services stated that all comments made by Cabinet today would be taken on board and amended within the report prior to submission for approval by Full Council on 2nd March, 2017. He also reported that the Government were late in announcing the grant regime and it was unlikely a response would be received before the papers for Council were published. He stated that legal advice had been sought and it was advised that the provisional figures set would be used. It was reported that although there was a risk of change to business rates in the South East of the Country, it was hoped that there would be no change in the figure for grants.

In conclusion, the Mayor reported that the budget proposals demonstrated a well-run and efficient Council despite the austerity measures set by the Government. She highlighted that 68% of the Council spends went on services provided by local businesses which had helped Doncaster's economy grow and thrive. She took the opportunity to thank all staff for their efforts and stated that she would always seek further improvements to ensure the borough moves forward.

4. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

A list of options for the 2017/18 savings have been produced and considered over the preceding months. Savings for 2018/19 onwards will be formulated.

The budget proposals seek the appropriate balance in meeting the savings whilst still delivering on the key priorities; protecting front-line services where possible in particular adults and children's social care services.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS

There were no declarations.

6. IF EXEMPT, REASON FOR EXEMPTION

Not Exempt

7. DIRECTOR RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Steve Mawson, Chief Financial Officer & Assistant Director Finance